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Wisconsin Folklore

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The layouts on the various ethnic groups are organized into ten chapters based on world regions: Africa, Asia/Pacific Islands, Central and South America, North America, Middle East, and five areas of Europe. Each chapter begins with a brief narrative that includes some historical background, current spatial distribution, and selected socioeconomic characteristics. The main section of the book is preceded by a useful introduction discussing the authors' purpose, a summary and brief analysis of historical periods of migration to Wisconsin, an explanation of ethnic group coverage, the sources of statistical data, and the design of the maps and graphics. Equally informative are the three appendixes: a series of bar graphs comparing each group on a wide variety of demographic and socioeconomic criteria; comparative population tables showing each group's numerical total in the state and the nation, as well as population totals for each group by county; and a series of reference maps showing various state subdivisions.

For serious students of immigration and ethnicity, perhaps the most interesting and provocative section is "General Patterns of Ethnic Diversity," in which the authors discuss the apparent discrepancy between the sum total of the ethnic group-specific maps and the patterns shown on two composite maps titled "Predominant Ethnic Group" and "Index of Ethnic Diversity." Although the former suggests that Wisconsin has become "a colorful mosaic of separate ethnic regions, communities, and smaller enclaves or neighborhoods" (184), the latter two show that people of German ancestry are the predominant group in nearly 88 percent of the state's census tracts, while less than 10 percent of those entities score "very low" or "low" in ethnic diversity. Whatever the dominant trend may prove to be, Zaniewski and Rosen demonstrate convincingly that the process of collecting and jarring is still at work in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Folklore, compiled and annotated by James P. Leary. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. xviii, 542 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$69.95 cloth, \$27.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ROCKY SEXTON, AUGUSTANA COLLEGE

Wisconsin Folklore is an anthology that has both breadth and depth. James Leary opens the book with a brief autobiographical preface in which he traces how a "cheesehead" (as he proudly identifies himself) became interested in the academic study of the folklore of his home state. This is followed by a delightful introductory essay on Wisconsin

and its folklore that touches on everything from Packermania to the notorious murderer Ed Gein to pioneering Wisconsin folklorists.

The main body of the book is divided into five topical sections: Terms and Talk; Storytelling; Music, Song, and Dance; Beliefs and Customs; and Material Traditions and Folklife. Within these categories various authors contribute a total of 48 entries, consisting of previously published materials and unpublished reports. Leary introduces each entry with an in-depth commentary that contextualizes that particular subject. *Wisconsin Folklore's* breadth is impressive, with topics ranging from Welsh settlements to beer brewing, from Finnish folktales to the music of recent Hmong immigrants. It even includes folk songs of early twentieth-century "refugees" (my term) from Appalachian coal-mining towns. Native American culture is represented with articles, for example, on Ojibwe stories, Menominee dance songs, and Oneida wakes. Because of the numerous entries, making even a brief mention of each is impossible. Some of my favorites include "Shrines and Crosses in Rural Central Wisconsin," "Polka Music in a Polka State," and "Ten Thousand Swedes: Reflections on a Folk Motif" (sure to delight hard-core Norwegians). The book concludes with a selected bibliography and selected list of audio and visual resources related to Wisconsin folklife.

Some entries in *Wisconsin Folklore* date as far back as 1884, and many of these writings were previously unpublished or appeared in rather inaccessible outlets. The selected reading list as well as the guide to audio and visual collections provide hundreds of additional sources for those interested in historical documents. Many of these items are potentially helpful to those exploring ethnic history or the past Wisconsin Native American experience. However, *Wisconsin Folklore* includes many pieces based on recent research and thus provides insight into the state's contemporary ethnic diversity. As such, it is of obvious value to folklorists, cultural geographers, anthropologists, and oral historians. In terms of broader regional interest, because Wisconsin and adjacent states such as Iowa have experienced similar waves of immigration, Leary's volume should be a valuable source of comparative data. This is especially true for those researching subjects such as Scandinavian, Dutch, and German immigrants and their descendants' culture and identity.

The scholarly quality of *Wisconsin Folklore* is somewhat uneven. Many entries are very brief and purely descriptive whereas others are reprints of in-depth articles and book chapters from academic publications. All are interesting and valuable in their own right. Therefore, *Wisconsin Folklore* should be on the shelf of all who profess interest in the folklife of Wisconsin and the upper Midwest in general.

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